

Section 5
Comments and Coordination

SECTION 5

Comments and Coordination

Since the initiation of the I-74 Iowa-Illinois Corridor Study in November 2000, project staff, including members of the Iowa and Illinois DOTs and the consultant team, have met with representatives from federal and state resource agencies, including the U.S. Coast Guard (involved as a cooperating agency), county and city officials, transportation providers, the metropolitan planning organization, business and civic groups, and local residents.

Through a structured coordination and communication program designed to encourage maximum input, a full-range of opportunities for meaningful input was provided. Overall, the coordination program was tailored to three primary audiences: agency and elected officials, interested groups, and the public.

This section provides a summary of the agency coordination and public involvement that occurred during the preparation of the Draft EIS.

5.1 The Effects of Early Coordination

Providing information and receiving feedback was a key element of the study process. Through a structured program that provided numerous opportunities for input, the I-74 corridor study was able to obtain the broadest participation at all levels: the public, interested groups, agencies, and elected officials.

Using a multitude of communication tools, the public was provided numerous avenues in which to become involved. Through approximately 25 meetings—including meetings with interested groups, two major public meetings, numerous Advisory Committee and resource agency meetings, newsletters, web site, and media—persons in the Quad Cities were offered opportunities to obtain information and to be heard. Through this outreach program, the study team gained a thorough understanding of the transportation issues facing Quad Cities residents.

Many of the comments received during this study emphasized a frustration with growing congestion and safety concerns along the I-74 corridor, reflecting the need for major improvements. This study focused the transportation discussion on the major problems and potential solutions.

The public involvement process helped frame the project purpose and need and the alternatives. Support for major improvements, including a new bridge structure, was expressed by many Quad Cities residents, business groups, communities, and elected officials based on the transportation benefits and cost effectiveness.

5.2 Federal, State, and Local Agency Coordination

At the beginning of the study, two groups were established to provide a forum for discussing the project and soliciting comments from various agencies and elected officials.

The two groups were the Resource Agency Group and the Advisory Committee. The Resource Agency Group used the regularly scheduled NEPA/404 merger meeting forum to meet and discuss the project. The Advisory Committee met at critical points during project development. These groups provided input to the process, including local perceptions on transportation needs/issues, assistance with obtaining data, study approach, and study output review. An overview of these two groups and their roles in the study follows.

5.2.1 Resource Agency Group

The Resource Agency Group consisted of state and federal resource and regulatory agencies involved in the NEPA process ([Table 5-1, Resource Agency Group](#)). At the onset of the project, this group received an Early Coordination packet to familiarize them with the study area and project background.

The role of the Resource Agency Group was to:

- Communicate issues, concerns, and regulatory requirements associated with resources in the study area
- Review technical aspects of the study
- Achieve concurrence on established points from the Statewide Implementation Agreement
- Participate in meetings and share agency information

TABLE 5-1
Resource Agency Group

Iowa Department of Natural Resources	Illinois Department of Transportation
Natural Resources Conservation Service	Illinois Department of Agriculture
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Coast Guard	Federal Emergency Management Agency
National Park Service	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Federal Aviation Agency – USDOT	Scott County Conservation Board
Federal Highway Administration, Iowa Division	Federal Highway Administration, Illinois Division
State Historical Society of Iowa	

The first NEPA/404 Merger meeting for the I-74 corridor study was held on June 20, 2001, at Blackhawk College in Moline, Illinois. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce resource and regulatory agencies to the project, discuss how the differences between the Illinois DOT and the Iowa DOT merger agreements would be handled, and introduce the purpose and need for the project. Concurrence on the purpose and need was not sought at this meeting. The following were determined at the meeting:

- The process to be followed is the Iowa NEPA/404 merger process.
- The merged process would be followed until it was determined that the project would not require an Individual Section 404 Permit.
- Iowa DOT would be the lead state transportation agency.
- FHWA Iowa Division would be the lead FHWA office.

The second NEPA/404 Merger meeting for the I-74 corridor study was held on December 5, 2001, via videoconference from Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Dixon, Illinois; Springfield, Illinois; and Kansas City, Kansas. This meeting addressed the first three concurrence points: purpose and need, alternatives to be analyzed, and alternatives to be carried forward. The purpose and need was modified from what had been presented at the prior NEPA/404 meeting to address the requirement to maintain traffic on I-74 during construction. Concurrence was reached on purpose and need. Alternatives to be analyzed were reviewed, and concurrence was reached on the range of alternatives to be analyzed. Alternatives to be carried forward were reviewed along with the rationale for selection of alternatives to be studied in detail. This included a description of which alternatives met the established engineering criteria, what environmental impacts were likely to occur, the magnitude of effect on socioeconomics in the area, and project costs. Concurrence was subsequently reached on the alternatives to be carried forward.

5.2.2 Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee consisted of representatives from local government, regional planning, and transportation agencies. These representatives are listed in [Table 5-2, I-74 Project Advisory Committee Members](#).

TABLE 5-2
I-74 Project Advisory Committee Members

Scott County Engineer	Rock Island County Superintendent of Highways
Bettendorf City Administrator	Moline City Administrator
Davenport Director of Public Works	Bi-State Regional Planning Commission *
Iowa Department of Transportation	Illinois Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration – Iowa Division *	Federal Highway Administration – Illinois Division *

* Ex-officio Member

The Advisory Committee was assembled to guide development of a consensus solution for I-74, to serve as a two-way communication link between the project team and the communities, and to provide a mechanism for key stakeholders to provide input on project actions and decisions.

Specific roles and responsibilities included:

- Communicate local issues and concerns related to I-74 and their constituencies to the consultant team.

- Serve as a communication link to and from represented community and agency.
- Review and provide guidance on project issues.
- Guide and endorse project recommendations.
- Assist in developing evaluation criteria for alternatives screening.
- Actively participate in the public involvement program

The group met nine times from 2001 through 2003 to discuss project progress, and to provide input at key project decision points. Minutes from each meeting are included in the official administrative record of the study.

TABLE 5-3
I-74 Project Advisory Committee Meetings

	Meeting Date	Topic
Meeting 1	January 2001	Project introduction, study process and schedule overview, quarterly work plan, advisory committee - roles, responsibilities, operating guidelines, coordination and communication plan, study area limits
Meeting 2	April 2001	Project status, project purpose and need, alternatives development and evaluation procedures, planning framework, preliminary concept alternatives, funding strategies, next steps
Meeting 3	June 2001	Project status, funding strategies, alternatives objectives and measures, concept alternatives, public involvement activities, Bi-State Policy Committee issues, next steps
Meeting 4	October 2001	Project status, Pubic Meeting #1 summary, funding strategies, concept alternatives evaluation, public involvement strategies, Bi-State Policy Committee issues, next steps
Meeting 5	March 2002	Chartering meeting refresher, project status, environmental studies, alternatives development, public involvement strategies, implementation strategies
Special Meeting	April 2002	Bike/pedestrian accommodations, public involvement strategies
Meeting 6	June 2002	Project status and schedule, alternatives development, project implementation strategies, continued use options for existing structures, public involvement, next steps
Meeting 7	November 2002	Project status and schedule, I-74 Corridor ITS architecture development, project implementation plan, Public Meeting #2 summary, Mississippi River bridge continued use options, local funding responsibilities discussion, alternatives development and evaluation, public involvement strategies
Meeting 8	April 2003	Project status, funding strategies and implementation schedule, build alternatives and design variations, procedures for identification of preferred alternative, public involvement strategies, next steps
Meeting 9	October 2003	Project status, Draft Environmental Impact Statement preview, public hearing preview, pending engineering analyses (preceding identification of preferred alternative), public involvement strategies, next steps

5.2.3 MetroLINK Meeting

Project staff met with MetroLINK officials on June 6, 2002, at the MetroLINK offices to discuss the proposed alternatives under consideration for the I-74 project and opportunities to integrate transit enhancements into the project.

There was a discussion regarding the existing Mississippi River bridges and whether it would be reasonable to retain the existing bridges for exclusive transit use. MetroLINK officials indicated that due to steep approach grades and their structural capacity, the existing I-74 bridges could not practically be adapted to future rail transit use. In regards to exclusive bus transit (i.e., bus rapid transit), MetroLINK indicated that this option also is not practical due to the high costs and relatively low ridership potential.

Opportunities to accommodate transit enhancements with the proposed alternatives for I-74 were discussed. Specifically:

- The new I-74 bridges and mainline should provide opportunities for future transit accommodations.
- Ramps should be designed to accommodate ramp bypass lanes for buses.
- The possibility of providing park-and-ride lots along the I-74 corridor was discussed. MetroLINK indicated that based on prior studies, there does not appear to be an appreciable demand for park-and-ride lots given the absence of major trip origin and destination hubs in the region.
- The possibility of providing bus turnouts, either along I-74 or along major local roadways was discussed. MetroLINK officials noted that given travel demand and traffic operating characteristics in the region, there does not appear to be a need for bus turnouts.

The minutes of this meeting are located in [Appendix C, Correspondence](#).

5.3 The Public and Interested Groups

Opportunities for general public involvement included an interactive web site, public meetings, speakers' bureaus/small group meetings, and newsletters. Up-to-date study information was periodically distributed through newsletters and on the study web site.

5.3.1 Public Information Meetings

Two rounds of public meetings were held during the study process. In order to encourage participation for each round, two meetings were held, one in Illinois and one in Iowa. The project's public involvement process did not exclude any individuals. Meeting locations were specifically selected to accommodate bus dependent persons, and meetings with the pastor of a local Spanish church were held to identify the best methods for reaching his congregants and other Hispanic residents. The meetings were announced through study newsletters, advertisements in local newspapers, news releases, invitation letters to interested individuals/groups on the study mailing list, and flyers posted at various locations.

The public meetings were conducted in an open-house format, with personnel from the Iowa and Illinois DOTs, their consultants, and members of the Advisory Committee on hand to answer questions and receive comments about the study. A meeting summary, which includes comments made at the meeting, is available by request from either the Iowa DOT or Illinois DOT. A public hearing will be held after release of this DEIS for public review and comment. The hearing will also be conducted in an open-house format and held in two locations, one in Iowa and one in Illinois.

Public Information Meeting #1

The first round of meetings were held on July 30, 2001, at The Mark Conference Center in Moline, Illinois, and on July 31, 2001, at the Bettendorf Public Library in Bettendorf, Iowa. The same information was presented at both meetings. Personnel from the Iowa DOT, the Illinois DOT, their consultants, and members of the I-74 Project Advisory Committee were present to answer questions and receive comments about the project.

The purpose of the meeting was to present information regarding current I-74 conditions, the purpose and need for proposed improvements, and to present and obtain public comment on concept alternatives developed in the early stages of the study. In addition, information and exhibits regarding the public involvement program, the overall study process and schedule, and environmental resources and documentation were presented. Comments were accepted through August 31, 2001. A total of 42 written comments were received. In addition to written public comments, a project team debriefing was held following each public information meeting. A summary of public comments heard by project team members during the meeting as well as general observations of meeting staff were prepared and will be considered with continuing study efforts.

The following is a summary of the issues and concerns expressed at Public Information Meeting #1 and the response that was provided:

Issue:	A majority of comments support the need for improvements along I-74.
Response:	The public generally supports the need for major improvements along I-74. Problems typically cited by the public include congestion, narrow roadway width, poor merging and weaving conditions at interchanges, and poor sight distance.

Issue:	How will interchanges be improved?
Response:	All interchanges within the study area will be improved to meet current design standards and to provide safe and efficient connections to adjacent communities. The most notable improvements are being considered adjacent to the Mississippi River in downtown Moline and Bettendorf, where the close spacing of successive ramps and severe vertical grades result in safety and operational problems. Improvements under consideration include reconfiguring the 3 rd Street ramps, reconfiguring and relocating the 7 th Avenue ramps, constructing auxiliary lanes across the Mississippi River to accommodate entering and exiting ramp traffic, reconfiguring and relocating ramps at State Street and Grant Street, and eliminating the ramps at Kimberly Road. Complementary improvements are also being considered on connecting local highways.

Issue:	Pedestrians and bicyclist needs should be included with planned improvements.
Response:	Under consideration are the need and opportunities for improved bicycle and pedestrian connections both across the Mississippi River and through the I-74 corridor, as well as transit accommodations and connections. The project team has considered the demand, feasibility, and costs for these types of services in coordination with area officials. Where appropriate, accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists would be incorporated into the proposed I-74 improvements.

Issue:	What will happen with the existing Mississippi River bridges?
Response:	The existing I-74 suspension bridges cannot be widened due to the design characteristics. Therefore, new bridges will need to be constructed to accommodate the improved I-74 roadway. Reuse of the existing bridges for other travel purposes, such as a new local roadway connection, transit corridor, or pedestrian/bicycle paths is possible, provided that a local agency would have interest in assuming jurisdiction and responsibility for future maintenance of the existing bridges. If there is no local interest in assuming jurisdiction of the bridges, the existing bridges will be removed. At the time of this meeting, no local agency or community had identified itself as willing to adopt jurisdiction of the existing bridge(s).

Issue:	What improvements can be accomplished in the near term?
Response:	Improvement concepts developed with the earlier study focused on long- term solutions that will provide safe, efficient, and reliable travel along a vital roadway link in the Quad Cities. Recognizing that this study is but the first step in a multi-phase process and that construction of major improvements along I-74 is not funded in current highway programs, near-term improvements will be considered. With the next stage of this study, under consideration are interim improvements, such as motorist information systems, traffic signal improvements, and local roadway and intersection improvements adjacent to interchange ramps.

Public Information Meeting #2

The second round of public informational meetings were held on July 10, 2002, at The Mark Conference Center in Moline, Illinois, and on July 11, 2002, at the Paul Norton School in Bettendorf, Iowa. The same information was presented at both meetings. Personnel from the Iowa DOT, the Illinois DOT, their consultants, and members of the I-74 Project Advisory Committee were present to answer questions and receive comments about the project.

The purpose of the meeting was to present information regarding current I-74 conditions, the purpose and need for proposed improvements, continued use options for the existing bridges, and project development issues, as well as to present information and obtain public comment on the proposed alternatives, including continued use options for the existing Mississippi River bridge(s). In addition, information and exhibits regarding the public involvement program, the overall study process and schedule, possible bridge type concepts, and environmental resources and documentation were presented.

Comments were accepted through August 1, 2002. A total of 46 written comments were received. In addition to written public comments, a project team debriefing was held following the public information meetings. A summary of public comments heard by project team members during the meetings, as well as general observations of meeting staff, were prepared and considered with continuing study efforts.

The following is a summary of common issues and concerns expressed at Public Information Meeting #2 and the response that was provided:

Issue:	A majority of comments received support the need for improvements along I-74.
Response:	The public participating in the meetings generally supports the need for major improvements along I-74. Problems typically cited by the public continue to include congestion, narrow roadway width, poor merging and weaving conditions at interchanges, and poor sight distance. Some, however, expressed the opinion that if other regional improvements (i.e., construction of new Bettendorf-East Moline Bridge) are implemented, the need for major improvements along I-74 would diminish.
Issue:	Views about proposed interchange improvements.
Response:	Public comments, in large part, recognized that existing interchanges contribute to the problems to be addressed by the proposed project. Many individuals believe that minor changes to the interchanges will greatly improve conditions. Comments were received from property owners adjacent to the U.S. 67 interchange who expressed concern about how the proposed improvements will affect access and traffic circulation. One specific concern related to east-west access under I-74 between Grant Street and Kimberly Road, and whether access could be maintained along Holmes Street and Mississippi Boulevard.
Issue:	Pedestrians and bicyclist needs should be included with planned improvements.
Response:	Many individuals continued to express support for the proposed provision of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, particularly across the Mississippi River. The need and opportunities for improved bicycle and pedestrian connections both across the Mississippi River and through the I-74 corridor as well as transit accommodations and connections are still being considered. The project team has been assessing the demand, feasibility, and costs for these types of services in coordination with area officials. Incorporating accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists into the proposed I-74 improvements where appropriate and reasonable is still under consideration.
Issue:	Concern regarding plans for existing and new Mississippi River bridges.
Response:	As mentioned before, the existing I-74 suspension bridges cannot be widened due to the design characteristics. Therefore, new bridges will need to be constructed to accommodate the improved I-74 roadway. Reuse of the existing bridges for other travel purposes, such as a new local roadway connection, transit corridor, or pedestrian/bicycle paths is possible, provided that a local agency would have interest in assuming jurisdiction and responsibility for future maintenance of the existing bridges. If there is no local interest in assuming jurisdiction of the bridges, the existing bridges will be removed. As of yet, no transit agency (i.e., MetroLINK) or local community has offered to adopt jurisdiction of the existing bridge(s). The public largely views the Mississippi River bridges as important, and if construction of new bridges is necessary, they would like the new bridges to be aesthetically pleasing. Concern was raised about whether an aesthetically pleasing crossing could be provided with a new bridge alongside an existing bridge. Some expressed the opinion that the new bridges should be designed in a manner reflective of the existing bridge. Three types of bridges appear possible at this location : arch, cable-stayed, and suspension. The existing bridges are suspension bridges; therefore, the designs for a new bridge include one that is similar to the existing bridges. Still others expressed the opinion that the bridges should remain “as is” with no improvements.
Issue:	Are there improvements that can be accomplished in the near term?
Response:	Public comments continue to reflect an interest in realizing near-term improvements. The first stage of this study proposed long-term goals for improving the Quad Cities transportation network. As such, the next stage of this study focuses on interim improvements, including motorist information systems, traffic signal improvements, and local roadway and intersection improvements adjacent to interchange ramps.

5.3.2 Small Group Meetings

Meetings were held with interested groups throughout the course of the study. These groups include Downtown Bettendorf Business Owners, the Quad City Development

Group, Renew Moline, the Bettendorf Chamber of Commerce, Davenport One, and the “Save the Memorial Bridges” group.

In addition to these meetings, a series of bridge workshops were held to gauge community perceptions and desires regarding a new bridge structure. These meetings included elected representatives for each of the area communities, city planning and development staff, historic preservation groups, bicycling enthusiasts, and members of veterans groups.

Save the Memorial Bridges Committee

Project staff met with the “Save the Memorial Bridges” Committee (SMBC) on several occasions. During these meetings, information and ideas were exchanged between the two groups. The SMBC encouraged the project team to explore all viable reuse options and funding strategies. The project team discussed the study process, schedule, and alternatives under consideration, including bridge reuse options.

Alternatives suggested by the SMBC such as rerouting I-74, and renaming I-74 to I-74 Business, as well as the construction of a third center bridge ([Section 2.2.2, Mississippi River Bridge Reuse Options for Roadway Uses](#)) were considered by the project team. Rerouting I-74 is not a viable option because only a small portion of the existing traffic would be removed from I-74 due to the high percentage of local traffic and the distance to other interstate facilities (approximately 7 miles and 8 miles to I-280 and I-80, respectively). The construction of a third center bridge was not recommended for further evaluation as it is not practical or viable due to a combination of physical and structural constraints, and since this option would not meet purpose and need.

River Action, Inc.

The River Action Board of Directors, at their meeting on May 2, 2003, approved a position with the following four points: 1) any new bridge should provide a safe dedicated passage for bicyclists and pedestrians as a part of its basic construction funding; 2) any new bridge should provide safe and convenient access to the riverfront for motorists; 3) a new bridge should be either a “signature” bridge or utilize one or both of the present spans for a signature; and 4) interested citizens and groups should be included on the bridge planning committee which has the authority to make significant bridge planning decisions.

Project staff met with River Action, Inc. members on September 10, 2003, to update the group on the status of the study. During the meeting, members of River Action inquired about the options being considered for accommodating a bike/pedestrian crossing of the Mississippi (those alternatives are discussed in [Section 2, Alternatives](#)) and the project schedule. They also indicated interest in reviewing the Draft EIS, when available, and participating in discussions involving the selection of the bridge type if a new bridge is construction.

5.3.3 Property Owner Meetings

The I-74 project team met with 27 individual property owners via one-on-one meetings on February 6 and 7, 2003. The meetings were held at the Iowa DOT Davenport offices. The purpose of the meetings was to provide interested property owners and business owners in downtown Bettendorf an opportunity to talk to project staff regarding overall project issues,

potential impacts to individual properties, and Iowa DOT property acquisition procedures. A variety of project information was available at the meetings, including interchange, underpass, and connection options under consideration; existing and future downtown Bettendorf traffic pattern diagrams; preliminary U.S. 67 traffic forecasts; Iowa DOT property acquisition brochures; and the latest project newsletter.

Property owners attending the one-on-one meetings included business owners and homeowners that would potentially be affected by one or more of the alternatives. Concerns raised at the meetings included displacements, impacts during construction, noise, relocation assistance, loss of parking, restricted access, construction related impacts, as well as property valuation issues. Concerns related to specific properties will be addressed during more detailed design phases. Property acquisition concerns will be addressed under the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (42 USC 4601). Relocation assistance under this program would be made available to all relocatees without discrimination ([Section 4.2.2, *Residential Relocation Impacts*](#)).

5.3.4 Project Videos

Three videos were developed during the course of the study. The first introductory video was broadly distributed to area officials and the media as an introduction of the project. The other two videos were produced in conjunction with the first and second rounds of public meetings. These videos provided an overview of the progress and accomplishments of the project to date, as well as introduced the materials presented at the meetings. A copy of each video was distributed and aired on public access television, and was also made available, as requested, to the media and elected officials.

5.3.5 Newsletters/Brochures

Two study newsletters were distributed throughout the development of the Draft EIS. The newsletters described important study information, included an update from the project Advisory Committee, and provided opportunity for public input. The newsletters included postage-paid comment forms and were distributed by mail, posted to the study web site, and were also available for pickup at or mailed by request from the offices of I-74 Project Advisory Committee members.

In addition to the newsletters, a study brochure was developed for and distributed to members of the Advisory Committee. The brochure provided a study overview and an explanation of the overall project implementation program. The three documents are summarized in [Table 5-4, *Newsletters and Brochures*](#).

TABLE 5-4
Newsletters and Brochures

	Meeting Date	Topic
Newsletter Issue 1	Spring 2001	Message from Project Advisory Committee; Did You Know?; Existing Road Conditions; I-74 Study to Identify Viable Solutions; Alternatives to be Considered; Opportunities for Participation and Comment Form
Newsletter Issue 2	Winter 2002	Message from Project Advisory Committee; Purpose and Need; What We've Heard; Concept Alternatives; Proposed Alternatives; Comment Form
Brochure 1	Winter/Spring 2002	Introduction; Project Segments and Preliminary Costs; Project Implementation and Funding Requirements; Proposed I-74 Improvements; The Corridor and Economic Development in the Quad Cities

5.3.6 Web Site

A study web site, <http://www.i74corridorstudy.org>, was established as another means of disseminating information about the study. The site, on-line from early 2001 through early 2003 and updated regularly, was promoted via study newsletters and at the public information meetings. Initially, the site contained general study information, including an introduction to the study, study organization, and schedule. It also contained an inquiry/feedback page. As the study progressed, the following information was posted on the site:

- Public information meeting graphics
- Newsletters
- Study findings and reports
- Links to other relevant web sites

The study web site was accessed by approximately 7,835 users, and more than 60 comments were received via the form-based inquiry/feedback page. Many of the comments were similar to those raised through the public information and small group meetings, including support for the proposed project, the fate of the existing bridge, interest in bike/pedestrian accommodations, and the schedule for project completion. [Sections 5.3.1](#) and [5.3.2, Public Information Meetings](#) and [Small Group Meetings](#), detail ways in which comments received from the public were incorporated into the study process. The study web site was recently reactivated.

5.3.7 Mailing List

A mailing list of more than 1,000 names was developed and updated regularly throughout the course of the study. The list included interested individuals; property owners in the study corridor; representatives of interest groups, state, county, and local elected officials; and appropriate agency personnel. The mailing list was used to generate newsletter mailing lists and meeting invitations.